

DUDLEY SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 16th October, 2012 at 6.00 pm
at Saltwells Education Development Centre,
Bowling Green Road, Netherton, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Mr L Ridney - Chair

Mr J Conway, Mr I Dalloway, Mrs A Garratt, Mr P Harris, Mrs P Hazlehurst, Mr R Hinton, Mr S Hudson, Mr P Jones, Mr M Lynch, Ms T Pearce, Mrs A Richards, Mrs P Rogers, Mrs H Ruffles, Ms S Scott, Mr N Shaw and Mr G Withers.

Persons not a member of the Forum but having an entitlement to attend meetings and speak

Director of Children's Services

Officers

Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) (Directorate of Children's Services); Children's Services Finance Manager, Senior Principal Accountant and Miss H Shepherd (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

Member of the Public

Mrs A Hannaway - Observing

1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Following consideration it was

RESOLVED

- (i) That the election of Vice-Chair be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs K Daley, Mr R Timmins, Ms S Rogers and Councillor Crumpton.

3. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Ms S Scott was serving as a substitute member for Ms S Rogers.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 11th September 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No issues were raised under this item.

6. SCHOOLS FUNDING REFORMS 2013/14 – CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on consultation feedback to the Forum in order that the Forum could provide the Director of Children's Services with a view prior to implementation of the mainstream formula funding methodology for the 2013/14 financial year.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report and in doing so informed the Forum that the closing date for the consultation had been 5th October, 2012. Sixty three responses had been received in total in relation to the consultation, fifty six of which had been from Primary Schools, five from Secondary Schools and two from Academy Schools. Copies of the final responses updating Appendix 1 to the report submitted were circulated at the meeting. It was the intention to take feedback from the meeting in relation to the eight consultation questions to enable and to assist the Director of Children's Services to make final decisions in completing the funding pro-forma, which needed to be returned to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) by 31st October 2012.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) made reference to each of the eight questions individually and requested comments. He referred to the recommendations made by the Head Teachers Consultative Forum - Budget Working Group in relation to each question.

Members made comments in relation to question four of the consultation relating to the value of the lump sum allocated to schools in Dudley. A Primary Head Teacher representative stated that the £130k lump sum would maintain a 'status quo' especially for Primary Schools and would continue to enable the 'Early Intervention' scheme, which was considered to be important in identifying pupils' needs prior to entering into the Secondary sector.

A Secondary Head Teacher representative then expressed his concerns in relation to the impact the £130k lump sum would have on the larger secondary schools within the borough and considered that funding should be pupil driven.

Comments were made by a Primary Head Teacher representative in relation to question seven of the consultation relating to the capping of the maximum financial gain for each school. It was stated that this item had been discussed in depth at the Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group and it was considered that the new formula needed to be clear and transparent and reviewed following the first initial year, with further discussion to be had.

With reference to question eight of the consultation relating to the notional SEN budget, concerns were raised by a Special Schools Head Teacher representative with regards to Special Schools funding. The Director of Children's Service confirmed that discussions with regard to this were still being undertaken. She reminded members that this was a change in process and stated that it would be reviewed in the future. She also stated that the Government were trying to arrive at a fair funding formula for all schools and this would be a key piece of work for at least the next two years.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report, the appendices to the report submitted and the updates circulated at the meeting, on the Schools Funding Reforms 2013/14 – Consultation Feedback, be noted.
- (ii) That the comments made by the Schools Forum Members at the meeting in respect of the eight formula funding questions outlined in the School Funding Reform Consultation, be taken into consideration by the Director of Children's Services.

7. SCHOOL FUNDING REFORMS – DE-DELEGATIONS 2013/14

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on consultation feedback in order that decisions regarding de-delegations could be made in preparation for the 2013/14 financial year.

The Children's Services Finance Manager presented the report, referring to the appendices submitted and the updated Appendix 3, which had been circulated at the meeting and explained the voting procedure to members. She stated that Academy Schools were unable to de-delegate funds however they were entitled to buy back into services provided by the Local Authority on a traded service basis.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Education Services) referred to each of the eleven services/budgets referred to in the consultation and the recommendations made at the Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group and requested comments from the members present.

In relation to question eight – EMAS Service – Community Languages Programme, there was discussion as to whether to delegate and offer a traded service. The Director of Children's Services accepted members comments but expressed the importance of this being explained correctly if it was to be agreed, as this service was used in other educational facilities as well as the community programme and requested that colleagues that were not present at the meeting needed to be informed.

Primary representatives expressed their gratitude to Secondary representatives for their support in relation to question nine – Library service for primary pupils, as this was considered to be a valued service within Primary schools.

With regards to question ten – Union facilities time in schools, it was stated that the Head Teachers Consultative Forum – Budget Working Group recommended that this service be de-delegated but it was felt that a review of Traded Union facility time was required and should take place before April 2013.

In response to a question raised the Director of Children's Services stated that all budgets de-delegated would need to be controlled and managed to ensure that there was no overspend, as the Directorate had no further funding to support these services other than the contingency fund. If the budget were to be exceeded, then the services currently being provided would need to be looked into and addressed as necessary.

In response to a question raised by a member it was stated that the Local Authority had a duty to support union facilities time in schools and that it was custom and practice across all Local Authorities to make time and support available.

The Director of Children's Services stated that it was important for the de-delegation of expenditure to be reviewed on a yearly basis.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the information contained in the report, the appendices to the report submitted and circulated at the meeting, be noted.
- (ii) That the recommendations outlined in the updated Appendix 3, circulated at the meeting, in respect of de-delegated budgets for maintained primary schools for 2013/14 financial year, be approved by primary school representatives who were entitled to vote in accordance with the Regulations.
- (iii) That the recommendations outlined in the updated Appendix 3, circulated at the meeting, in respect of de-delegated budgets for maintained secondary schools for 2013/14 financial year, be approved by secondary school representatives who were entitled to vote in accordance with the Regulations.

8. SCHOOLS FORUM REGULATIONS 2012

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted to advise the Forum that the Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012 had been approved by Parliament and were effective from 1st October 2012.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and appendices to the report, submitted on Schools Forum (England) Regulations 2012, be noted.

9. SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERSHIP – UPDATE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on an update on the current position in relation to Schools Forum Membership and future training for Schools Forum Members, which was proposed for early 2013.

In presenting the report the Children's Services Finance Manager informed the Forum that there were three new members, namely Mr M Weaver, Mrs J Belcher and Mr C Derham, currently in the process of being elected, but who were still subject to approval. However if the nominees were to be successful they would fill the two primary Governor vacancies for the Halesowen and Stourbridge Townships and the Pupils Referral Unit representative vacancy. It was anticipated that these appointments would be made in time for the next meeting of the Forum.

It was also stated that Mrs Hannaway had been nominated to be the representative of the Diocesan Schools Worcester Diocesan Board of Education, nominated by the Board, and that it was proposed that Mr D Ward would replace Mrs K Daley as a Primary School representative for Central Dudley township and Mr D Kirk would replace Mr R Hinton as a Special Education representative, all three nominations were subject to approval.

The Children's Services Finance Manager informed the Forum that the 'best practice' guidance had not yet been issued, but once received would be circulated to Forum members. She also referred to the proposed training for new and existing Forum members and stated that a date had not been confirmed, but dates currently being considered were 29th January 2013 and 5th February 2013.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, the appendix to the report submitted and the information presented at the meeting in relation to the Schools Forum Membership, be noted.

10. EDUCATION FUNDING AGENCY LETTER TO CHAIRS AND CLERKS OF SCHOOLS FORUM

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising School Forum Members of correspondence received from the Education Funding Agency (EFA), a copy of which was attached as appendix A to the report submitted.

The Children's Services Finance Manager confirmed that the EFA Representative for the West Midlands Region would be Sue Reekie who would be able to attend, as an observer, future meetings of the Dudley Schools Forum.

Arising from a question raised it was stated that the purpose of the EFA representative attending meetings would be to ensure that the Forum was complying with the new regulations and to scrutinize the process.

The Senior Principal Accountant stated that the EFA could return the agreed pro-forma, following scrutiny, to the Local Authority, if they were not in agreement with its content.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted, be noted.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum would be held at Hillcrest School and Community College, Simms Lane, Netherton on Tuesday, 13th November, 2012.

RESOLVED

That the dates and venues of the remaining future meetings of the Forum in 2012/13 be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

CHAIR